

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 19 April 2016
Report Subject	The Improvement Plan 2016-17
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance
Report Author	Chief Executive
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Improvement Plan for 2016/17 has been refreshed and updated to reflect the key priorities of the Council for next year. The structure of the plan is retained with the eight priorities and the sub priorities. Five of the eight priorities continue with a refresh of longer term projects or ambitions, whereas the remaining three have been reviewed to reflect local circumstances and priorities.

There is also a new section within each sub priority which references national issues which have the potential to impact upon achievement of the priorities. These issues will also be referenced, where relevant, in the next refresh of the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2016-2020.

This first draft of the Improvement Plan is still in some places, work in progress, as details are finalised. This is more apparent in the detailed 'How we Measure' document. Both documents are to be considered by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees prior to final consideration by Cabinet in June and endorsement by County Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To approve the substantial content of the Improvement Plan and 'How we Measure' document.
2	To agree any changes in the documents with Portfolio leads and members prior to consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN
1.01	It is a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) to set Improvement Objectives and publish an Improvement Plan. It is a statutory requirement for the County Council to adopt the Improvement Plan.
1.02	Improvement Objectives and an accompanying Improvement Plan were first set and adopted by the Council in 2011. For 2013/14 the Council thoroughly reviewed the priorities to streamline them and reset them with clearer outcome based aims. A revised set of eight priorities supported by a structure of sub-priorities was adopted.
1.03	The Plan presentation also changed providing detail for each of the priorities which were to have the most impact during the year. This has helped the organisation to concentrate on the outcomes where most immediate attention was needed.
1.04	In recent years the Plan has been effective in setting priorities and achieving outcomes. This has been validated by the Wales Audit Office (WAO) as below.
1.05	<p>The WAO in its Corporate Assessment report of March 2015 said that <i>“the Council has established a wide-ranging set of clearly-stated priorities that have a broad base of support within the Council and among partners”</i>.</p> <p>In addition the report commented on: <i>“The Council sets out its vision clearly within its Improvement Plan, as required by the Local Government Measure 2009 (the Measure). For 2014-15, the Council’s coherent set of eight strategic priorities is underpinned by more detailed sub-priorities, some of which are identified clearly as areas of particular focus during the year. Though wide-ranging, the Council’s vision demonstrates a clear commitment to continuous improvement, reflected by targets for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its services, particularly those associated with its in-year Improvement Objectives.”</i></p> <p>The format and content of the Plan was also commented upon: <i>“The Council has worked hard to improve the quality of this key plan and the Improvement Plan for 2014-15 is a clear and accessible document that sets out far more clearly than before what the Council plans to do and how its success might be measured and evaluated.”</i></p>
1.06	<p>For 2016/17 a review of the current priorities and sub-priorities has been undertaken to set: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • priorities that continue into 2016/17 for sustained attention; • priorities that can now be removed as completion of a time-limited piece of work e.g. Universal Credit preparation, use of the National

	<p>Procurement Service;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • priorities which could be broadened into more strategic issues e.g. 'Creating jobs and growing the local economy', the care home market; • priorities which could be merged e.g. Fuel Poverty and Maximising Income; • emerging priorities for 2016/17 e.g Improving chances for Looked after Children, mental health. <p>Sub-priorities have also been set to take into account Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny priorities, priorities of partners, public views and service demands and national policy and legislation.</p>
1.07	<p>For each sub-priority which continues to be high profile for 2016/17 there has been a review based on: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the reasoning for the priority status; • what we will do and how we will measure achievement; and • the risks that will need to be managed. <p>In addition there is a section on national policy issues which may impact our ability to deliver and achieve.</p>
1.08	<p>The Improvement Plan in totality is presented as 2 documents that are inter-related; firstly the 'public' version of our statements of intent around the 8 priorities (Appendix 1) and secondly the document that describes the targets and milestones on which achievement will be measured (Appendix 2). This is the document that is used by Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees to monitor progress during the year.</p> <p>Appendix 1 is the core content of the 8 priorities; the final document will have more contextual information plus information that is required to be in the Plan as part of the Measure.</p>
1.09	<p>The working draft documents are to be considered by Members at each relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee during May (apart from Education and Youth later in April). These Committees will also review any additional targets for the statutory national performance indicators.</p>
1.10	<p>The final Improvement Plan will be available as a web-based document published on the website before the end of June following endorsement by County Council.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Resource implications have been considered during preparation of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and will continue to be monitored during the regular budget monitoring and financial planning arrangements.</p>

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	All Overview and Scrutiny Committees will have the opportunity to consider and review the content of the Improvement Plan priorities including the opportunity to scrutinise targets set for 2016/17.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Delivery of the plan objectives is risk managed as part of each of the sub priorities of the Improvement Plan and is monitored and reported against quarterly by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
4.02	The risks to the statutory requirements of the Plan include: not publishing the plan within statutory timescales (30 June) and not adhering to the prerequisite content. Both these risks are managed through adherence to well established procedures for i) publishing the Plan and ii) ensuring that the content of the plan reflects the requirements of the Measure.
4.03	An additional risk is that Members do not endorse the Plan; consultation with Members both individually and as part of the Scrutiny process allows for full engagement.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Draft Improvement Plan 2016/17 Appendix 2 – ‘How we Measure’ document

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Contact Officer: Karen Armstrong, Policy and Performance Manager Telephone: 01352 702740 E-mail: karen.armstrong@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Improvement Plan: the document which sets out the annual priorities of the Council. It is a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to set Improvement Objectives and publish an Improvement Plan. Corporate Assessment: in 2013/14 the Wales Audit Office (WAO) began a new four year cycle of Corporate Assessments of improvement authorities in Wales. An in depth Corporate Assessment reports on the Council’s track record of performance and outcomes as well as the key arrangements necessary to underpin improvements in services and functions. Flintshire’s first Corporate Assessment was conducted in late 2014 and the report on its outcomes was included in the Annual Improvement Report reported to Cabinet in March 2015.

	<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy: a written strategy which gives a forecast of the financial resources which will be available to a Council for a given period, and sets out plans for how best to deploy those resources to meet its priorities, duties and obligations.</p>
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